

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE FORM PTO-1390 (REV. 1-98)		ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER BO 41592
TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US) CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371		U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known, see 37 CFR 1.5) 09/529778
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/NL98/00602	INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE 20 October 1998	PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED 20 October 1997
TITLE OF INVENTION HEARING AID FOR IMPROVING THE HEARING ABILITY OF THE HARD OF HEARING		
APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US Marinus Marias BOONE, Augustinus Johannes BERKHOUT and Ivo Leon Diane Marie MERKS		
Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:		
<p>1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This is a FIRST submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.</p> <p>2. <input type="checkbox"/> This is a SECOND or SUBSEQUENT submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.</p> <p>3. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)) at any time rather than delay examination until the expiration of the applicable time limit set in 35 U.S.C. 371(b) and PCT Articles 22 and 39(1).</p> <p>4. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A proper Demand for International Preliminary Examination was made by the 19th month from the earliest claimed priority date.</p> <p>5. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau). b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> has been transmitted by the International Bureau. (see PCT/IB/308) c. <input type="checkbox"/> is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US). </p> <p>6. <input type="checkbox"/> A translation of the International Application into English (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).</p> <p>7. <input type="checkbox"/> Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <input type="checkbox"/> are transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau). b. <input type="checkbox"/> have been transmitted by the International Bureau. c. <input type="checkbox"/> have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired. d. <input type="checkbox"/> have not been made and will not be made. </p> <p>8. <input type="checkbox"/> A translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).</p> <p>9. <input type="checkbox"/> An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).</p> <p>10. <input type="checkbox"/> A translation of the annexes of the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).</p>		
Items 11. to 16. below concern document(s) or information included:		
<p>11. <input type="checkbox"/> An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.</p> <p>12. <input type="checkbox"/> An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.</p> <p>13. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A FIRST preliminary amendment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A SECOND or SUBSEQUENT preliminary amendment. </p> <p>14. <input type="checkbox"/> A substitute specification.</p> <p>15. <input type="checkbox"/> A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.</p> <p>16. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other items or information:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">International Preliminary Examiantion Report.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Search Report.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Application Data Sheet.</p>		

U.S. APPLICATION NO. 09/529778	INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/NL98/00602	ATTORNEYS DOCKET NUMBER BO 41592		
17. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The following fees are submitted: BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492 (a) (1) - (5)): Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO \$ 970.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO \$840.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO \$690.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$670.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$96.00 ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =		CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY		
		\$ 840		
Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)).		\$ 130		
CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE	\$
Total claims	11 - 20 =	0	x \$18.00	\$ 0
Independent claims	1 - 3 =	0	x \$78.00	\$ 0
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable)			+ \$260.00	\$
		TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =	\$ 970	
Reduction of 1/2 for filing by small entity, if applicable. A Small Entity Statement must also be filed (Note 37 CFR 1.9, 1.27, 1.28).		+ \$		
		SUBTOTAL =	\$ 970	
Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)).		\$		
		TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =	\$ 970	
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31). \$40.00 per property +		\$		
		TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =	\$ 970	
		Amount to be refunded:	\$	
		charged:	\$	
<p>a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A check in the amount of \$ <u>970</u> to cover the above fees is enclosed.</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. _____ in the amount of \$ _____ to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.</p> <p>c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required by 37 CFR 1.16 and 1.17, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.</p>				
<p>NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137 (a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.</p>				
<p>SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:</p> <p>Young & Thompson 745 South 23rd Street 2nd Floor Arlington, VA 22202 (703) 521-2297</p> <p>Customer No. 000466</p>				
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Benoit Castel</i></p> <p><u>SIGNATURE</u></p> <p>Benoit Castel</p> <p><u>NAME</u></p> <p>35,041</p> <p><u>REGISTRATION NUMBER</u></p>				

09/529778

421 Rec'd PCT/PTO 20 APR 2000

PATENTS

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of

Marinus Marias BOONE et al.

Serial No. (unknown)

Filed herewith

HEARING AID FOR IMPROVING
THE HEARING ABILITY OF THE
HARD OF HEARING

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents

Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Prior to the first Official Action and calculation
of the filing fee, please amend the above-identified applica-
tion as follows:

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please substitute Page 1 as originally filed with
the attached Page 1 which was filed in the Article 34 amend-
ment of January 14, 2000, and is marked "AMENDED SHEET".

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Replace Sheet 2/3 of the drawings as originally
filed with Sheet 2/3 of the drawings filed in the Article 34
amendment of January 14, 2000, which is attached hereto and
marked "AMENDED SHEET".

IN THE CLAIMS:

Marinus Marias BOONE et al.

Please substitute Claims 1-11 as originally filed, which appear on pages 9 and 10, with Claims 1-11 as filed in the Article 34 amendment of January 14, 2000. The pages containing Claims 1-11 are marked "AMENDED SHEET" and are attached hereto. Please amend these claims as follows:

Claim 3, line 1, cancel "or 2".

Claim 5, line 1, cancel "2, 3, or 4,".

Claim 6, line 1, cancel "2, 3, or 4,".

Claim 8, line 1, cancel "6, or 7,".

Claim 10, line 1, cancel "6, or 7,".

R E M A R K S

The above changes in the specification, claims and drawings merely place the national phase application in the same condition as it was during Chapter II of the international phase, with the multiple dependencies in the claims being removed.

Respectfully submitted,

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April 20, 2000

Hearing aid for improving the hearing ability of the hard of hearing

The invention relates to a hearing aid for improving the hearing ability of the hard of hearing, comprising an array of microphones, the electrical output signals of which are fed to at least one transmission path belonging to an ear.

A device of this type is known from the article entitled "Development of a directional hearing instrument based on array technology" published in the "Journal of the Acoustical Society of America", Vol. 94, Edition 2, Pt. 1, pages 785-793, August 1993.

It is generally known that loss of hearing in people can be compensated for by means of a hearing aid, in which amplification of the received sound is used. In environments with background noise, for example when several people are speaking at once, as is the case at a cocktail party, the hearing aid amplifies both the desired speech and the noise, as a result of which the ability to hear is not improved.

In the abovementioned article the authors describe an improvement proposal. The hearing aid disclosed in the article consists of an array of, for example, five directional microphones, as a result of which it is possible for the person who is hard of hearing to understand someone who is speaking directly opposite him or her. The background noise which emanates from other directions is suppressed by the array.

From US-A-4 956 857 an apparatus for suppressing signals from noise sources surrounding a target source is known. This apparatus comprises a receiving array including two microphones spaced apart by a distance. The outputs of the microphones are combined such that a primary signal channel and a noise signal channel are obtained. The outputs of the channels are subtracted for cancelling the noise from the primary signal channel.

The aim of the invention is to provide a hearing aid of the type mentioned in the preamble with which the abovementioned disadvantages are avoided and the understandability and the naturalness of the reproduction is improved in a simple manner.

Said aim is achieved according to the invention in that means are provided for deriving two array output signals from the output signals of the microphones, the array having two main sensitivity directions running at an angle with respect to the main axis of the array, and each of which is associated to an array output signal, and in that each array output signal is fed to its own transmission path one to the left ear and the other to the right ear of a person who is hard of hearing.

2/3

fig - 4

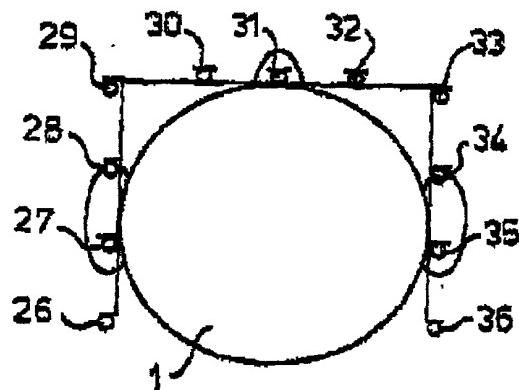


fig - 5

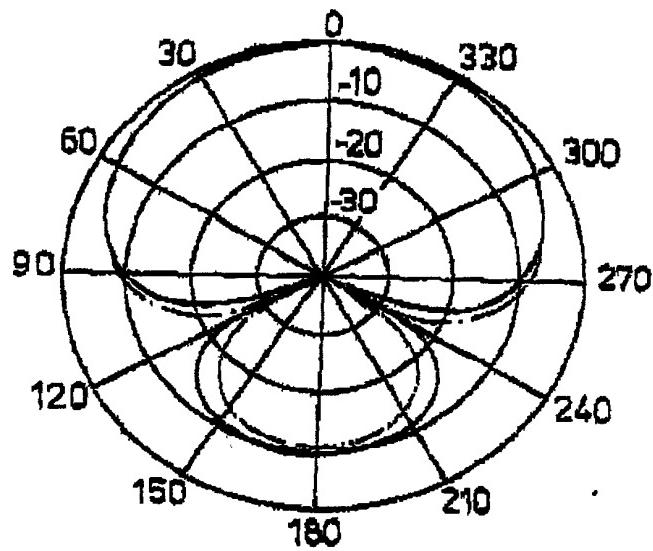
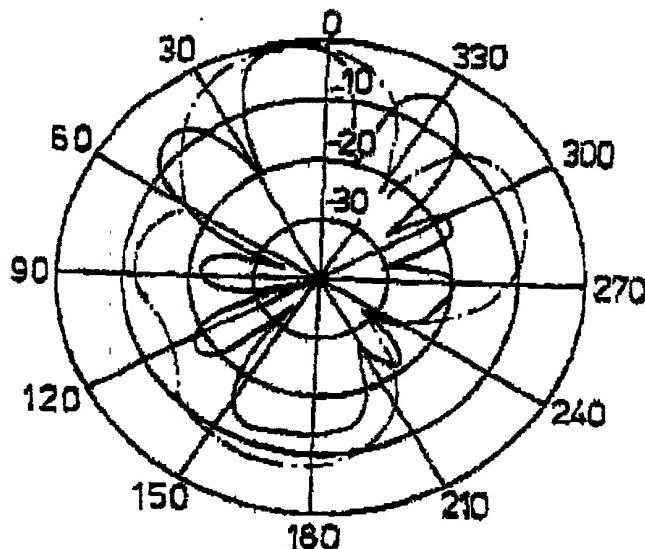


fig - 6



CLAIMS

1. Hearing aid for improving the hearing ability of the hard of hearing, comprising an array of microphones (8-12), the electrical output signals of which are fed to at least one transmission path belonging to an ear, characterised in that means are provided for deriving two array output signals from the output signals of the microphones (8-12; 26-36), the array having two main sensitivity directions (5,6) running at an angle with respect to the main axis of the array, and each of which is associated to an array output signal, and in that each array output signal is fed to its own transmission path, one to the left ear and the other to the right ear of a person who is hard of hearing.
5
2. Hearing aid according to claim 1, characterised in that the array (29-33) is mounted on the front (2) of a pair of spectacles.
3. Hearing aid according to claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the array is mounted on an arm (3,4) of a pair of spectacles.
15
4. Hearing aid according to claim 2, characterised in that each arm (3,4) of the spectacles is provided with an array of microphones and in that the output signals from said arrays are each fed to the one or, respectively, the other transmission path.
5. Hearing aid according to claim 1, 2, 3, or 4, characterised in that the means for deriving the array output signals contain a summing device (18), from the output of which an array output signal can be taken off and to the inputs of which the microphone output signals are fed via a respective weighting factor device (13-17).
20
6. Hearing aid according to claim 1, 2, 3, or 4, characterised in that the means for deriving the array output signals contain a series circuit of a number of summing devices (23, 24, 25, 26) and weighting factor devices (18, 19, 20, 27), the outputs of the microphones (9-11) arranged between the two outermost microphones (8-12) being connected to the other inputs of the summing devices, which other inputs are not connected to a weighting factor device, in that one (12) of the outermost microphones of the array is connected via a weighting factor device (27) to the input of the summing device (26) associated with the adjacent microphone (11) and in that the input of a weighting factor device (18) is connected to the output of the summing device (24) of the microphone adjacent to the other outermost microphone (9), the one input of a summing device (23) being connected to the output of said weighting factor device (18).
25
30

10

the output of the last-mentioned microphones (8) being connected to the other input of the summing device (23) and it being possible to derive an array output signal at the output of the summing device (23).

7. Hearing aid according to claim 6, characterised in that the array output signal is derived via a further weighting factor device.

8. Hearing aid according to claim 5, 6, or 7, characterised in that the weighting factor device (13-17, 18, 19, 20, 27) comprises a delay device.

9. Hearing aid according to claim 8, characterised in that the weighting factor device (13-17, 18, 19, 20, 27) comprises an amplitude-adjustment device.

10. Hearing aid according to claim 5, 6, or 7, characterised in that the weighting factor device (13-17, 18, 19, 27) comprises a phase-adjustment device.

11. Hearing aid according to claim 10, characterised in that the weighting factor device (13-17, 18, 19, 27) comprises an amplitude-adjustment device.

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

31 PAR

422 Rec'd PCT/PTO 20 APR 2000

1

HEARING AID COMPRISING AN ARRAY OF MICROPHONES

The invention relates to a hearing aid for improving the 5 hearing ability of the hard of hearing, comprising an array of microphones, the electrical output signals of which are fed to at least one transmission path belonging to an ear.

A device of this type is known from the article entitled "Development of a directional hearing instrument based on array 10 technology" published in the "Journal of the Acoustical Society of America", Vol. 94, Edition 2, Pt. 1, pages 785-798, August 1993.

It is generally known that loss of hearing in people can be compensated for by means of a hearing aid, in which 15 amplification of the received sound is used. In environments with background noise, for example when several people are speaking at once, as is the case at a cocktail party, the hearing aid amplifies both the desired speech and the noise, as a result of which the ability to hear is not improved.

- 20 In the abovementioned article the authors describe an improvement proposal. The hearing aid disclosed in the article consists of an array of, for example, five directional microphones, as a result of which it is possible for the person who is hard of hearing to understand someone who is speaking 25 directly opposite him or her. The background noise which emanates from other directions is suppressed by the array.

The aim of the invention is to provide a hearing aid of the type mentioned in the preamble with which the abovementioned disadvantages are avoided and the understandability and the 30 naturalness of the reproduction is improved in a simple manner.

Said aim is achieved according to the invention in that means are provided for deriving two array output signals from the output signals of the microphones, the array having two main sensitivity directions running at an angle with respect to 35 one another and each of which is associated to an array output signal, and in that each array output signal is fed to its own transmission path belonging to one ear of a person who is hard of hearing.

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

With this arrangement the signals from the microphones of the array are combined to give a signal for the left ear and a signal for the right ear. The array has two main sensitivity directions or main lobes running at an angle with respect to one another, the left ear signal essentially representing the sound originating from the first main sensitivity direction and the right ear signal representing that from the other main sensitivity direction. The array output signals, that is to say the left ear signal and the right ear signal, are fed via their own transmission path to the left ear and the right ear, respectively. Amplification of the signal and conversion of the electrical signal into a sound signal is employed in said transmission path.

The different main lobes introduce a difference in level between the signals to be fed to the ears. It has been found that it is not only possible to localise sound sources better, but that background noise is also suppressed as a result of the directional effect, as a result of which the understandability of speech is improved despite the existing noise.

The array can advantageously be mounted on the front of a spectacle frame and/or on the arms or springs.

In the case of an embodiment which is preferably to be used, each spectacle arm is also provided with an array of microphones, the output signals from the one array being fed to the one transmission path and the output signals from the other array being fed to the other transmission path.

What is achieved by this means is that understandability is improved not only at high frequencies in the audible sound range but also at relatively low frequencies.

Further embodiments of the invention are described in the subsidiary claims.

The invention will be explained in more detail below with reference to the drawings. In the drawings:

Figure 1 shows an embodiment of the hearing aid according to the invention;

Figure 2 shows a more detailed embodiment of the hearing aid according to the invention;

Figure 3 shows another embodiment of the hearing aid according

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

to the invention;

Figure 4 shows an embodiment of the hearing aid according to Figure 4 in which a combination of arrays is used, which embodiment is preferably to be used;

5 Figure 5 shows a polar diagram of a combined array from Figure 1 at 500 and 1000 Hz;

Figure 6 shows a polar diagram of an embodiment from Figure 1 at 2000 and 4000 Hz; and

Figure 7 shows the directional index of the embodiment in
10 Figure 4 as a function of the frequency.

The hearing aid according to the invention comprises an array of microphones. Said array can have any shape.

Said array has two array output signals which are each fed along their own transmission path, one to the left ear and the
15 other to the right ear of the person hard of hearing. In said transmission path amplification and conversion of the electrical signal from the array to sound vibrations are employed in the conventional manner.

The array has two main sensitivity directions running at an
20 angle with respect to one another, the various features being such that the first array output signal is essentially a reflection of the sound from the first main sensitivity direction, whilst the second array output signal essentially represents the sound from the second main sensitivity
25 direction. As a result the left ear as it were listens in a restricted first main sensitivity direction, whilst the right ear listens in the second main sensitivity direction.

The main sensitivity directions associated with the array output signals can be achieved by focusing or bundling the
30 microphone signals.

The array of microphones can be attached in a simple manner to spectacle frames. Figure 1 shows an embodiment of an array of microphones on the front of the spectacle frames, bundling being employed.

35 In Figure 1 the head of a person hard of hearing is indicated diagrammatically by reference numeral 1. The spectacles worn by this person are shown diagrammatically by straight lines, which spectacles consist, in the conventional

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

4

manner, of a front 2 and two spectacle arms or springs 3, 4.

The main lobe 5 for the left ear and the main lobe 6 for the right ear are also shown in Figure 1 as ellipses. Said main lobes are at an angle with respect to one another and with 5 respect to the main axis 7 of the spectacles.

As a result of the main lobes used above and the separate assignment thereof to the ears, a difference between the level of the array output signals is artificially introduced depending on the location of the sound source and also for the 10 noise. As a result of said artificial difference in the levels of the array output signals, the person hard of hearing is able to localise the sound source, but it has been found that said difference also improves the understandability of speech in the presence of noise.

15 Positioning the array of microphones on one or both of the spectacle arms is also advantageous.

The association of the array output signals to the associated main lobes of the array can be achieved in a simple manner by means of a so-called parallel or serial construction.

20 In the case of the parallel construction, the means for deriving the array output signals comprise a summing device, the microphone output signals being fed to the inputs of said summing device via a respective frequency-dependent or frequency-independent weighting factor device. An array output 25 signal can then be taken off at the output of the summing device. A main sensitivity direction associated with the relevant array output signal can be obtained by sizing the weighting factor devices.

In the case of the so-called serial construction, the means 30 for deriving the array output signals contain a number of summing devices and weighting factor devices, the weighting factor devices in each case being connected in series with the input and output of the summing devices. With this arrangement one outermost microphone is connected to an input of a 35 weighting factor device, the output of which is then connected to an input of a summing device. The output of the microphone adjacent to the said outermost microphone is connected to the input of the summing device. The output of the summing device

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

is connected to the input of the next weighting factor device, the output of which is connected to the input of the next summing device. The output of the next microphone is, in turn, connected to the other input of this summing device.

5 This configuration is continued as far as the other outermost microphone of the array. An array output signal, for example the left ear signal, can be taken off from the output of the last summing device, the input of which is connected to the output of the last-mentioned outermost microphone. It could
10 also be possible to derive the array output signal from the output of the said last summing device via a further weighting factor device.

In a further development, the weighting factor device comprises a delay device, optionally supplemented by an
15 amplitude-adjustment device.

In another development, the weighting factor device consists of a phase adjustment device, optionally supplemented by an amplitude-adjustment device.

Figure 2 shows the parallel construction with delay devices. The microphones 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 are shown on the right of Figure 2, which microphones are connected by a line in the drawing to indicate that it is an array that is concerned here. The outputs of the microphones 8-12 are connected to the inputs of the respective delay devices 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.
20 The outputs of said delay devices 13-17 are connected to the inputs of the summing device 18, at the output of which an array output signal, for example a left ear signal, can be derived. An amplitude-adjustment device, which can consist of an amplifier or a attenuator, can be incorporated, in a manner
25 which is not shown, in each path between a microphone and an input of the summing device. Preferably, the signal of the n^{th} microphone is delayed by a period $n\tau_t$. Figure 2 shows that the output signal from the microphone 8 is fed to the input of the summing device 18 with a delay period 0, whilst the output
30 signal from the microphone 9 is fed to the next input of the summing device 18 with a delay τ_t . The corresponding delays apply in the case of the microphones 10, 11 and 12; that is to say delay periods of $2\tau_t$, $3\tau_t$ and $4\tau_t$, respectively. The delay
35

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

6

period τ_t is chosen such that sound emanating from the direction which makes an angle of θ with respect to the main axis of the array is summed in phase. Then: $\tau_t = d \sin \theta / c$, where d is the distance between two microphones and c is the wave propagation rate.

A similar arrangement can be designed for the right ear signal.

Figure 3 shows the so-called serial construction with delay devices.

In the case of this embodiment shown a series circuit of 4 delay devices 18-21 and 4 summing devices 22-24 is used. The delay devices and summing devices are connected alternately in series. The microphone 12 is connected to the input of the delay device 21, whilst the outputs of the microphones 8-11 are connected to the respective summing devices 23-26.

With this embodiment as well the signal from the microphone 12 is delayed by a delay period of 4 times τ_t , if each delay device produces a delay of τ_t . After adding in the summing device 26, the output signal from the microphone 11 is delayed by a delay period of 3 times τ_t . Corresponding delays apply in respect of the microphones 9 and 10. The output signal from the microphone 8 is not delayed. If desired, a further delay device can be incorporated behind the summing device 23.

With this so-called serial construction as well it is possible to incorporate amplitude-adjustment devices in the form of amplifiers or attenuators in each part of the series circuit, each amplitude-adjustment device being associated with an output signal from a specific microphone in the array. The delay device used can simply be an all-pass filter of the first order, which can be adjusted by means of a potentiometer.

A microphone array 14 cm long can be used as a practical embodiment. As a consequence of the means described above for deriving the output signals from the microphones which are each associated with one main sensitivity direction, the microphones used can be very simple microphones of omnidirectional sensitivity. If desired, cardioid microphones can be used to obtain additional directional sensitivity.

If the angle between the two main sensitivity directions or

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

main lobes becomes greater, the difference between the audible signals, i.e. the inter-ear level difference, will become greater. Consequently the localisability will in general become better.

5 However, as the said angle between the main lobes becomes greater, the attenuation of a sound signal will increase in the direction of a main axis of the array. The choice of the angle between the main lobes will thus, in practice, be a compromise between a good inter-ear level difference and an acceptable
10 attenuation in the main direction of the array. This choice will preferably be determined experimentally.

Furthermore, on enlarging the angle between the main lobes, the main lobes will each be split into two lobes beyond a certain angle. This phenomenon can be avoided by use of an
15 amplitude-weighting function for the microphone signals.

In the case of an embodiment of the invention that is preferably to be used, an array attached to the front of the spectacle frames and two arrays, each attached to one arm of the spectacles, are used. An example with eleven microphones is
20 shown in Figure 4. The microphones 26, 27 and 28, which form the left array, are attached to the left arm of the spectacles and the microphones 34, 35 and 36 of the right array are attached to the right arm of the spectacles. The microphones 29-33 are attached to the front of the spectacle frames.

25 The signals from the microphones 29-33 are fed in the manner described above to the transmission paths for the left and the right ear, respectively. The signals from the microphones 26, 27, 28 are coupled to the transmission path for the left ear, whilst the signals from the microphones 34-36 are
30 fed via the other transmission path to the right ear.

At high frequencies an inter-ear level difference is created with the aid of bundling the array at the front of the spectacle frames and the shadow effect of the arrays on the arms of the spectacles has an influence. At low frequencies an
35 inter-ear time difference is created by means of the arrays on the arms of the spectacles. An inter-ear time difference is defined as the difference in arrival time between the signals at the ears as a consequence of the difference in propagation

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

time.

Figure 5 shows the directional characteristics of the combination of arrays in Figure 4 at a frequency of 500 Hz, indicated by a dash-and-dot line, and at 1000 Hz, indicated by 5 a continuous line. The directional characteristics in Figure 5 are obtained with the arrays on the arms of the spectacles. The array on the front of the spectacles is thus switched off since it yields little additional directional effect at low frequencies. In this way an inter-ear time difference is thus 10 created.

Figure 6 shows the directional characteristics of the combination of arrays at 2000 Hz, indicated by a dash-and-dot line,² and at 4000 Hz, indicated by a continuous line. In the mid and high frequency region of the audible sound range the 15 main lobes are directed at 11°, so that once again an inter-ear level difference is created.

Figure 7 shows the directivity index as a function of the frequency for 3 optimised frequency ranges. The continuous line applies for the low frequencies, optimised at 500 Hz. The 20 broken line applies for optimisation at 4000 Hz and the dash-and-dot line for optimisation at 2300 Hz.

It is also pointed out that an inter-ear level difference can also be produced with the arrays on the arms of the spectacles as with the array on the front of the spectacle 25 frames.

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

CLAIMS

1. Hearing aid for improving the hearing ability of the hard of hearing, comprising an array of microphones, the 5 electrical output signals of which are fed to at least one transmission path belonging to an ear, characterised in that means are provided for deriving two array output signals from the output signals of the microphones, the array having two main sensitivity directions running at an angle with respect to 10 one another and each of which is associated to an array output signal, and in that each array output signal is fed to its own transmission path belonging to one ear of a person who is hard of hearing.

2. Hearing aid according to Claim 1, characterised in that 15 the array is mounted on the front of a pair of spectacles.

3. Hearing aid according to Claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the array is mounted on an arm of a pair of spectacles.

4. Hearing aid according to Claim 2, characterised in that each arm of the spectacles is provided with an array of 20 microphones and in that the output signals from said arrays are each fed to the one or, respectively, the other transmission path.

5. Hearing aid according to Claim 1, 2, 3, or 4, characterised in that the means for deriving the array output 25 signals contain a summing device, from the output of which an array output signal can be taken off and to the inputs of which the microphone output signals are fed via a respective weighting factor device.

6. Hearing aid according to Claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, 30 characterised in that the means for deriving the array output signals contain a series circuit of a number of summing devices and weighting factor devices, the outputs of the microphones arranged between the two outermost microphones being connected to the other inputs of the summing devices, which other inputs 35 are not connected to a weighting factor device, in that one of the outermost microphones of the array is connected via a weighting factor device to the input of the summing device associated with the adjacent microphone and in that the input

WO 99/21400

PCT/NL98/00602

10

of a weighting factor device is connected to the output of the summing device of the microphone adjacent to the other outermost microphone, the one input of a summing device being connected to the output of said weighting factor device, the
5 output of the last-mentioned microphone being connected to the other input of the summing device and it being possible to derive an array output signal at the output of the summing device.

7. Hearing aid according to Claim 6, characterised in that
10 the array output signal is derived via a further weighting factor device.

8. Hearing aid according to Claim 5, 6 or 7, characterised in that the weighting factor device comprises a delay device.

9. Hearing aid according to Claim 8, characterised in that
15 the weighting factor device comprises an amplitude-adjustment device.

10. Hearing aid according to Claim 5, 6 or 7, characterised in that the weighting factor device comprises a phase-adjustment device.

20 11. Hearing aid according to Claim 10, characterised in that the weighting factor device comprises an amplitude-adjustment device.

WO 99/21400

1/3

fig -1

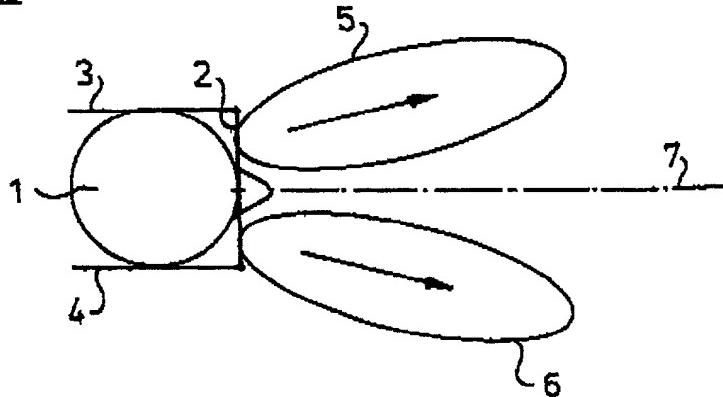


fig -2

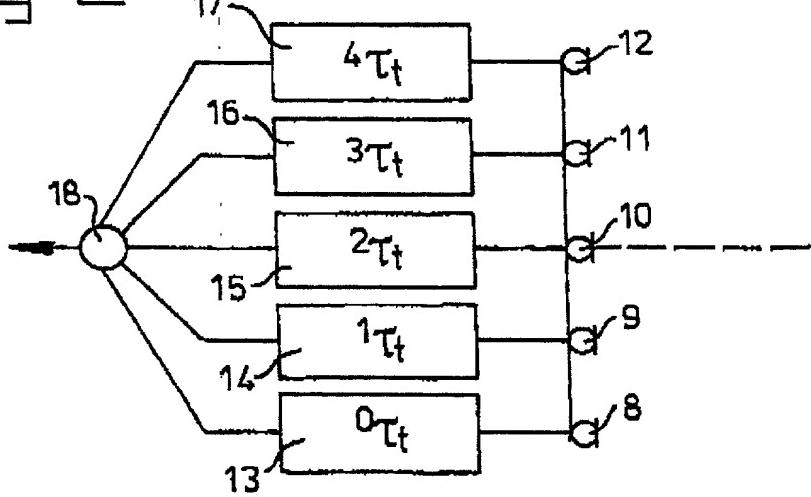
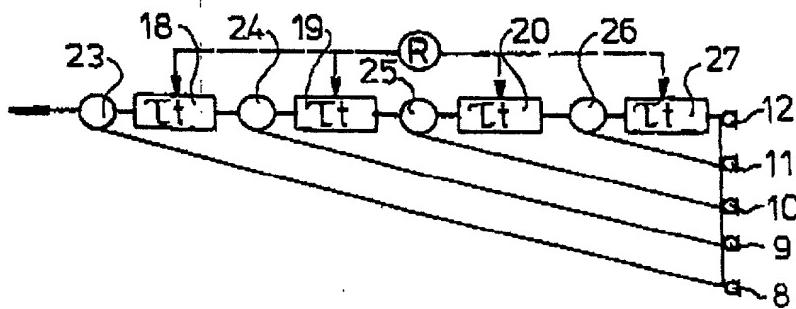


fig -3



WO 99/21400

09/529778
PCT/NL98/00602

2/3

fig - 4

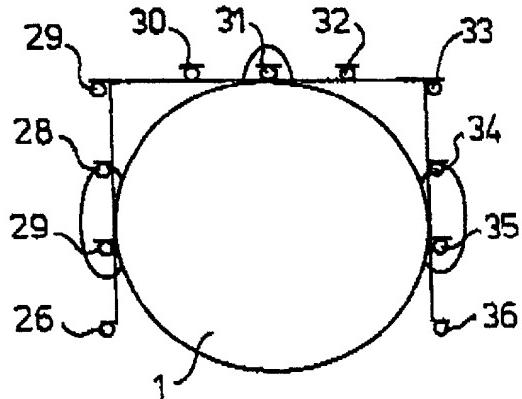


fig - 5

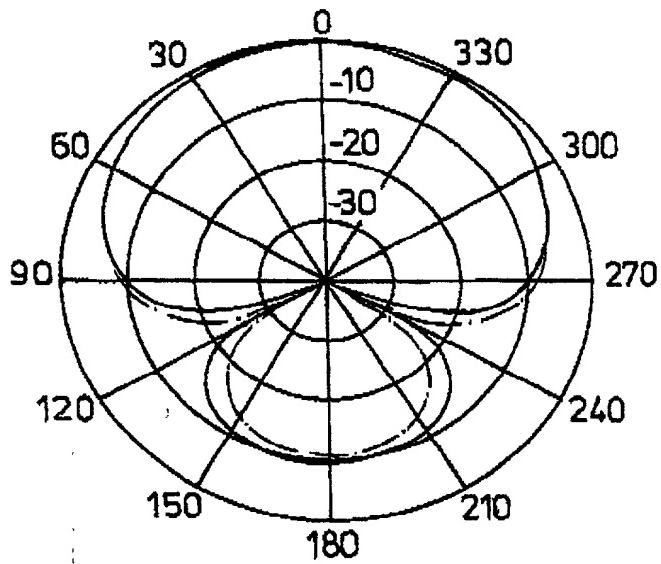
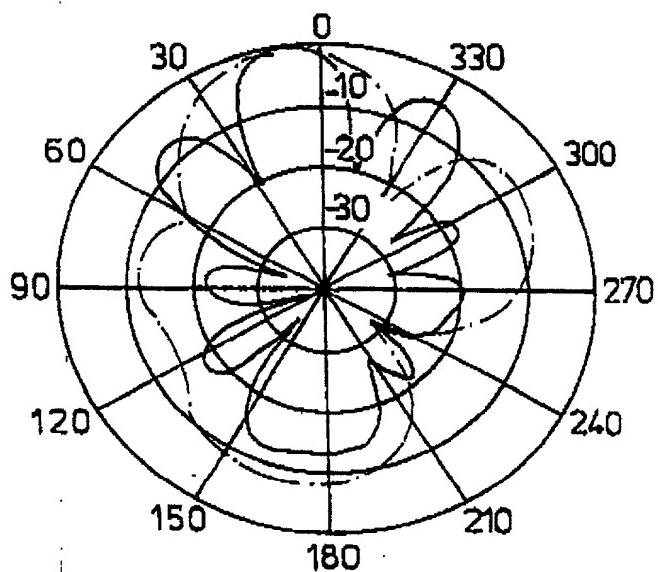


fig - 6

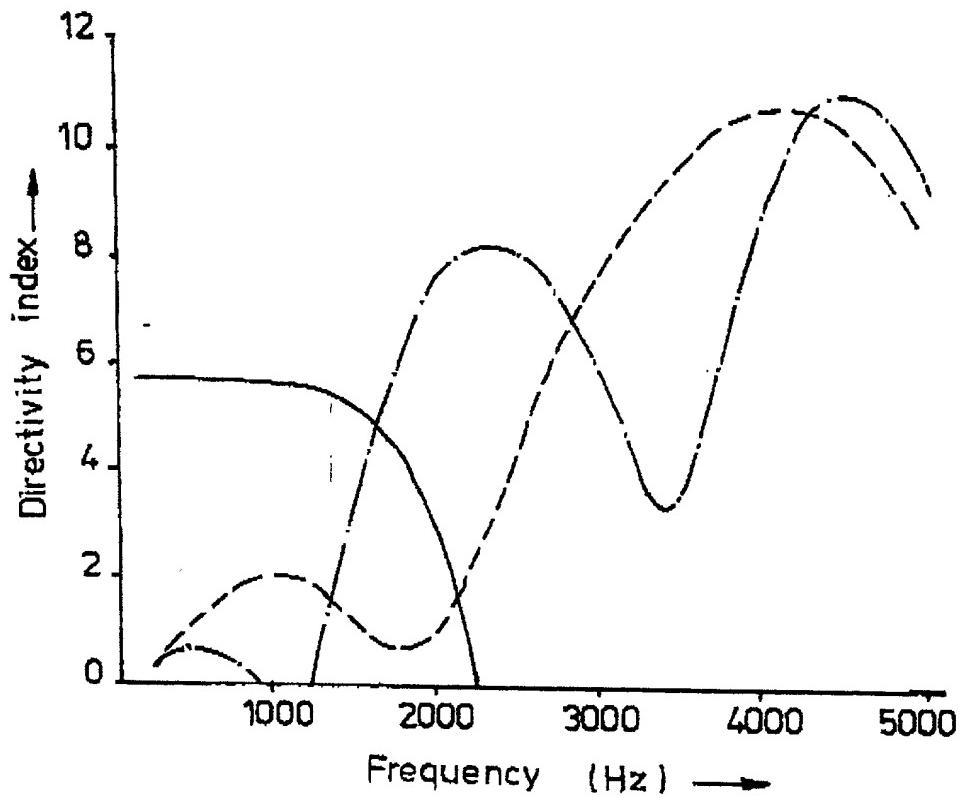


WO 99/21400

09/529778
PCT/NL98/00602

3/3

Fig - 7



COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

(ORIGINAL DESIGN, NATIONAL STAGE OF PCT OR CIP APPLICATION)

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name, I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

Hearing aid comprising an array of microphones

the specification of which: (complete (a), (b) or (c) for type of application)

REGULAR OR DESIGN APPLICATION

- a. [] is attached hereto.
b. [] was filed on _____ as Application
Serial No. _____ and was amended on _____
(if applicable)

PCT FILED APPLICATION ENTERING NATIONAL STAGE

- c. [X] was described and claimed in International application No.PCT/NL98/00602
filed on 20 October 1998
and as amended on _____ (if any)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF REVIEW OF PAPERS AND DUTY OF CANDOR

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, paragraph 1.56(a).

In compliance with this duty there is attached an information disclosure statement 37 CFR 1.97

PRIORITY CLAIM

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35. United States Code paragraph 119 of any foreign application (s) for patent of inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent of inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

(complete (d) or (e))

- d. [] no such applications have been filed
e. [X] such applications have been filed as follows

**EARLIEST FOREIGN APPLICATION(S), IF ANY FILED WITHIN 12 MONTHS
(6 MONTHS FOR DESIGN) PRIOR TO SAID APPLICATION**

Country	Application Number	Date of filing (day, month, year)	Date of Issue (day, month, year)	Priority claimed
The Netherlands	1007321	20 October 1997		Yes

**ALL FOREIGN APPLICATION(S), IF ANY FILED MORE THAN 12 MONTHS
(6 MONTHS FOR DESIGN) PRIOR TO SAID APPLICATION**

62b. did this application file date fall within
any one of the following months?

CONTINUATION-IN-PART

(Complete this part only if this is a continuation-in-part application)

I hereby declare claim the benefit under Title 35, United States code, paragraph 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claim of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, paragraph 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, paragraph 1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.) (Filing date) (Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.) (Filing date) (Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)

POWER OF ATTORNEY

⑥ As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith: Robert J. PATCH, Reg. No. 17,355, Andrew J. PATCH, Reg. No. 32,925, Robert F. HARGEST, Reg. No. 25,590, Benoît CASTEL, Reg. No. 35,041, Eric Jensen, Reg. No. 37,855, and Thomas W. PERKINS, Reg. No. 33,027 c/o YOUNG & THOMPSON, Second Floor, 745 South 23rd Street, Arlington, Virginia 22202.

Address all telephone calls to Young & Thompson at 703/521-2297.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that wilful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such wilful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

1-00
Full name of sole or first inventor: BOONE, Marinus Marias

Inventor's signature



Date 29 May 2000

Country of Citizenship: The Netherlands

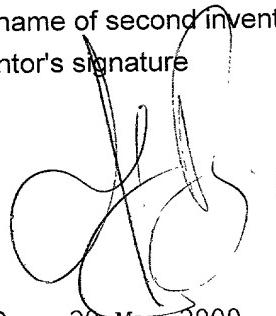
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Date 29 May 2000

Country of Citizenship: The Netherlands

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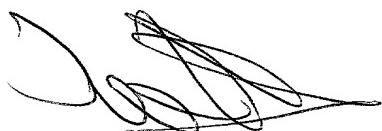
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3-00

Full name of second inventor: MERKS, Ivo Léon Diane Marie

Inventor's signature



Date 29 May 2000

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